

Try to Remember

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Summary: Booth and Brennan receive some unsettling news about a family member. Short and little bit angsty. And, no, I still don't own Bones.

## 1. Chapter 1 A Really Bad Day

Booth sat at his kitchen counter, staring into his glass of scotch as he swirled it gently. It was late, and the house was finally quiet. What a dayâ€|another new murder case, complete with a set of godawful remains, the SUV had broken down in the middle of a busy intersection during rush hour, Aubrey was out for at least a week with a bad case of the flu, and Booth had been stuck with a rookie agent as a temporary partner. He grimaced as he took another sip of his drink. \_And now this. Jesusâ€|\_

He turned slightly as he felt a gentle hand on his back. "Are you alright, Booth?" Brennan frowned slightly as she rubbed her husband's shoulders. "It's midnight. Maybe you should come to bed and try to get some sleep."

He reached up to stroke her hand. "Yeah, okay. I'll be there in a few minutes." He smiled faintly at his wife's look of concern. "I'm fine, really, Bones. It was a rough day at work today, you know? Those remains were terribleâ€|all stuck to those rocks like that in this heat, and that horrible smell...I'm having a hard time getting that crime scene out of my head." He ran his hand across his chin as he shook his head. "Seems like stuff is just piling up on me this weekâ€|" He sighed as he took another sip. "And, then this eveningâ€|" He ran a knuckle under his eye to wipe away a tear. "Reggie called me this eveningâ€|."

"Your mother's husband?" Brennan was surprised. "That's unusual, isn't it? We haven't heard from them for several months...not since Jared's memorial service."

"Yeah, my...stepfather. God, that still sounds strange, doesn't it?" Booth sighed as he poured himself another drink. "You're right. We haven't heard from them for quite a while. I guess I should've called them sooner to see how they were doing, but I got busy with work, and...you know, things have always been kinda awkward between my mom and me." He nervously ran his fingers around the rim of the glass. "Anyway, when my mom was at the memorial service, I thought things were a little bit off with her, you know? She'd forgotten that we named the baby Hank, and she couldn't remember Padme's name at all. Mom didn't even seem to remember that Jared had ever gotten married. She got really flustered and angry at the reception afterward because Reggie asked her how old Jared was, and she couldn't remember. I didn't think that much about it at the time, because of everything that had happened. I just figured she was still upset about Jared's death, and that she was taking it really hard. She hardly spoke to me the whole time I sat next to her at the reception, and I thought maybe somehow she still blamed me for his death." Another tear trickled down Booth's cheek. "It seemed like she was angry with me over how Jared had died and that I couldn't find a way to prevent it from happening. I couldn't make her understand the situation, you know? I tried to explain things again, but it was like she shut me out...she didn't want to listen to what I had to say."

"I'm sure she doesn't blame you for what happened to Jared, Booth. The things that happened to him were mostly of his own doing and out of your control. She knows that." Brennan sat down next to Booth. "But I don't understand. These issues seem to be normal reactions to stress and grief. Why would these things be a cause for concern?"

"Well, what I didn't know at the time was that these issues have been an ongoing problem for her. My mom has been having memory problems for quite some time now...things like forgetting Reggie's name, and the names of his kids, even though she's known them for years. She's forgotten how to fasten her bra and how to tie her shoelaces, and I guess she's left the stove on a couple of times after cooking dinner. They were lucky she didn't burn the house down. She left the water running in the bathtub one day and flooded the upstairs bathroom. She can't remember her own date of birth...or the words to her favorite songs..." Booth drained the Scotch from his glass and set it down on the bar. "So she went to the doctor about three weeks before Jared died, and the doctor told her that he thought she was beginning to exhibit the symptoms of a form of dementia. When Reggie called tonight, he said the diagnosis has been confirmed. She has a form of senile dementia. She's only 68 years old, so they were shocked by what the doctor said, and they were still trying to figure things out, like whether or not they wanted to make arrangements for home health care to help Reggie take care of her. This usually happens to people who are older than she is..."

"Oh, Booth...I'm so sorry." Brennan reached over to clasp her husband's hand. "That's terrible news. Did Reggie say how advanced her disease is?"

"He says that the memory loss has increased dramatically, even over the last few weeks, and that the doctor isn't sure why. The doctor wanted to know about her medical history, like if she had ever suffered any sort of head injury. Reggie didn't know, and Mom can't remember, so he called me to find out some stuff about what happened to her in the past. That meant that I had to tell Reggie about my dad

beating my mom and throwing her down the stairs." Booth stared at the kitchen counter as the memories of that event played out in his mind. "Reggie knew she'd been abused by my dad...he thought that's why Mom was so skittish about getting married again...but he had no idea about the extent of the abuse. Jesus, it was so hard for me when I had to tell him about that nightâ€|"

"Booth, that wasn't your fault, either. You were only a child at the timeâ€|" Brennan rubbed his shoulders again, trying to comfort him. "It's possible there may not be any link between her previous head injury and the dementia. The doctor is just trying to understand her health history."

"I know, but having to relive that whole thing when I talked to Reggie...it was like I was ten years old all over again. I guess I never got over what happened that night completely, and then, right after that happened, she left us...she left me and Jared alone with my dad, knowing he was violent. God, I hated my dad for that, and I think I hated my mom, too." Booth shook his head. "I know that none of it was my fault, but occasionally I still feel like should've done something differently. Gordon-Gordon explained it to meâ€|why I still feel that way..."

"When did you see Gordon-Gordon? I thought he was in France, teaching at a cooking school." Brennan's brow furrowed as she considered what her husband had told her.

"This was a long time ago, when I shot that clown's head on the ice cream truck. When Gordon-Gordon first asked me about my dad, I told him that Dad and I were 'tight', which was a lie, and he knew it, but he let it ride so we could work on the actual reason I was there to see him in the first place. Later on, he called me on the bullshit about my dad...he said the way I answered that question so quickly showed him that I had learned early on to hide the abuse I was taking because I felt like it was my fault, and he was right..that's exactly how I felt. I remember thinking if I could just be a better kid, or a better student or a better athlete, my dad wouldn't be so angry with me, but it never worked out that way. Gordon-Gordon said a lot of abused kids feel that same way, but he helped me understand that it was never my fault...it was all on my dad. Eventually I was able to get to a point where I could come to terms with what happened, even if I couldn't completely get over it. My dad had a lot of problems, like alcoholism and PTSD, and he was never able to get any help with them. I like to think that someday I'll be able to forgive him completely, and maybe my mom, too, for leaving me in that situation."

"You know what I think of psychology, but it seems that talking to Gordon-Gordon has helped you quite a bit over the years, Booth."

"Yeah, Gordon-Gordon is a great guy. I still get emails from him once in awhile." Booth got up from the counter and put his glass in the sink. He stood there for a moment, gazing out into the darkness beyond the kitchen window, shaking his head. "God damn it! I feel so sorry for Reggie. He loves my mom so much...he has for years, I guess, and now he has to just stand by and watch as she fades away, and there's not a damn thing he can do about it...nothing he can do to help her except to just be there for her. I don't know how he's gonna be able to handle that."

Brennan wrapped her arms around her husband's waist. "Your mother is lucky to have him, isn't she?"

"I think so. He wants me to come up next weekend so that I can check out the assisted living center that he's chosen for Mom. I'd just be gone for the day. Reggie says it's important to him to get my approval of the arrangements. He's gonna move in there with her after he sells their house."

"I think you should go, Booth. If nothing else, it may give you some peace of mind, knowing what kind of care your mother will receive."

"Yeah, you're right. Okay, I'll go out and see them next Saturday." Booth smiled as he pulled Brennan into his embrace. "I'm so lucky that I have you. Have I told you lately how much I love you?"

Brennan chuckled. "Perhaps, but I don't mind hearing it again. Come along, now, Booth. You need to get some sleep. You have to go to work tomorrow, remember?"

"Oh, alright, if you say so." Kissing her, he laughed. "What do you think...maybe a bit of love and romance to help me sleep?" He twitched his eyebrows as he flashed a dimpled smile at her.

"Only if you promise to be goodâ€¦" Brennan said with a twinkle in her eyes.

He took her hand as they walked toward their bedroom. "I promise...I'll be very, very goodâ€¦"

\_A/N: Well...what do you think? \_

## 2. Chapter 2 Memories of Times Past

\_A/N: a couple of short notes before we continue our story. I did a lot of research to find out the last name of Reggie, the husband of Booth's mom, but I couldn't find it, so I named him after the actor who played him. If any of you know what it is, I'd appreciate it if you let me know.\_

\_Also...several people have commented via reviews and PM that this story is very sad, and that's true, although I'm planning on what I hope is an uplifting ending. However, even though it's sad, I think it is perhaps a story that should be told, because several families face similar issues. So I'm going to finish this story, sad as it is. Maybe the next one can be cute and fluffy. Laura\_

Booth was clearing his desk on Thursday evening in preparation for missing the next day at work. The original plan had been for him to go with Reggie, his mother's husband, to visit the assisted living center where his mother was currently residing on Saturday, but Reggie had arranged for an appointment so that Booth could meet his mother's neurologist Friday afternoon. Reggie wanted Booth to understand everything that was going on with his mother's current health crisis, so Booth had agreed readily. He smiled to himself as he put the day's files away in the cabinet. Reggie seemed to be a

stand up kind of guy...kind and honest...the sort of man anyone would welcome into their family. Reggie wanted to make sure that Booth was informed every step of the way so there would be no secrets and no surprises when it came to his mother's care, and Booth found that he really appreciated Reggie's concern and attention to detail when it came to his mother's well-being. It was also obvious in talking to Reggie how much he loved his wife, and that he was truly devastated by her illness.

Booth decided to check his email one more time before leaving for the evening, and he finally found what he'd been waiting for. He'd sent an email to Gordon-Gordon on Monday morning, describing the situation with his mother, and requesting the chef's input. Booth chuckled at the craziness of the whole idea. How strange was that? Asking a retired psychologist turned chef for his opinion on matters dealing with family and relationships? Booth opened the email and read it thoughtfully, hearing Gordon-Gordon's voice in his head as he did.

\_Agent Booth, I am truly sorry to hear of your mother's illness. The news of her dementia is really quite dreadful. I certainly understand your need to visit the place where she will be residing to make sure it is suitable for her and that it will meet her physical and emotional needs. Please be aware, however, that the situation may be fraught with emotional landmines for you. Your own emotions may be very close to the surface while you visit her. My advice to you is to honestly acknowledge those emotions, and to allow yourself to feel them, even if you decide that it is not possible to express them civilly while you are with her. You may still be angry or hurt by the lack of relationship with your mother, and it would certainly be understandable, given the circumstances, if you feel unhappy when you see her again. It is important for you to believe that it is perfectly normal to feel that way. You are not less of a man if you feel that way, and you do not love your mother any less no matter how you feel. If you wish to explore these feelings further, I would not be adverse to receiving another email from you when convenient.  
GGW\_

Booth leaned back in his desk chair as he gazed out the window of his office. If he was being honest with himself, he'd have to admit to being nervous about the journey he was getting ready to take. Actually, he was absolutely terrified. He had no idea if his mother would even recognize him anymore, and even if she did, he wasn't sure what she would remember about their relationship. Things had still been a bit strained, even after she had attended his wedding, but maybe that was due to the onset of her illness...and maybe that wasn't even important anymore. Maybe it was time to move past all of the awkwardness and bad memories and just accept things the way they were. He'd go to see her and offer his support to Reggie. As her son, it was the least he could do for her husband.

Ooooooooooooo

Booth spent the almost four hour drive to Atlantic City trying to avoid thinking about all of the sad things that had happened during his childhood, choosing instead to try to remember the good times he'd had as a boy. He smiled as he remembered his mother pounding away on the old piano in their basement as she tried to work out the words to an advertising jingle, or as she practiced some song that

she wanted to sing at the VFW dinner or at the Elks' Lodge meeting. She'd always had a nice singing voice, and in an alternate reality she might have been famous as a singer. As it was, she had married when she was a very young woman, and Booth had been born soon afterward. He had vague recollections of his maternal grandparents, but they had died when he was a small boy. Booth watched the scenery rush by the car as he remembered the day his parents had brought his new baby brother Jared home from the hospital. His dad had left home again an hour or two later to go tell his friends at the corner tavern about his new son, and he'd come home that evening roaring drunk. That was the first time, Booth remembered...The first recollection he had of his parents yelling at each other...and things went to Hell quickly after thatâ€¦

Booth shook that memory off as he glanced in the rearview mirror. He wanted to concentrate on the good things...like his mother teaching him to dance as he stood on her feet while she sang those old songs to him, even though his father was afraid it would make him a 'sissy boy'; letting him pound on the piano while he pretended he was Liberace as he sang to his heart's content; giving him the Phillie Phanatic stuffed toy that was sitting in Hank's crib when Booth left home this morning...all of these glimpses into the past were the things he wanted to remember about his mother. She wasn't perfect...but then again, neither was he...and, he suspected, she really did love him, even if she had left him and Jared on their own when she left their father for good.

Finally, he understood. His dad had many mental health issues...alcoholism, PTSD, who knows what else...and for whatever reason, he never got help with any of them. Maybe his mom suffered, too, dealing with his father...and maybe she didn't know how or where to get help either. People in that time period didn't ask for help with problems like that...those problems were supposed to be solved in private at home. How many times had Pops said that it was a bad thing to air a family's dirty laundry in public? Maybe his mom was even too scared to tell the priest at their church about the abuse she suffered at the hands of her husband...the priest might've told her that was a wife's burden, and divorce was unacceptableâ€¦maybe she had no one to turn to, and she didn't know what else to do...

The four hours passed quickly as Booth mused on his parents' lives and their relationship with each other. At last he found himself in Atlantic City, following the directions Reggie had given him to the medical office building where the geriatric neurologist's offices were. He pulled his SUV into the parking lot and saw the smiling white haired man waving to him.

"Seeley, I'm glad you could make it. I know neither of us wanted to meet again this wayâ€¦".

Booth shook Reggie's hand as they entered the building. "I know...it's rough, isn't it? But I'm glad you called to let me know what's going on. I wouldn't want you to go through this thing all by yourself. I'm her son...I need to shoulder some of the burden and take on some of the responsibility, you know?"

"Marianne told me you'd say that." Reggie saw Booth's surprise. "She still has lucid moments from time to time. I told her you were coming to see her, and she said you were her knight, coming to protect her

from the bad guys."

"Yeah, wellâ€¦" Booth was slightly embarrassed as they waited for the elevator. "I'm glad to help you both however I canâ€¦"

"I know you are, son." Reggie felt Booth shift uncomfortably next to him in the elevator car. "Sorry. I guess I overstepped my bounds there, but listening to Marianne talk about you...hearing how proud she is of youâ€¦it made me think that it'd be great if I could count you as my son, tooâ€¦if you're okay with that, I meanâ€¦Look, I know things between you and your mom weren't always peachy, but I know you love your mom a lot, just like I do. Maybe we can try to work things out...the family stuff, that is..."

Booth glanced over at Reggie and realized that the older man was being sincere. "You're right...I think we can work on that...it might take me a bit of getting used to, you know, being called son and stuff like that...but I'd like to have you as part of my family, tooâ€¦"

"Great. Okay, we'll work on itâ€¦together..." The elevator chimed to let them know they had reached their floor. "Here we are...Dr. Whittaker's office is right down hereâ€¦"

After a short wait, Booth and Reggie were shown into the doctor's conference room. "Mr. Pine! It's good to see you again. And this gentleman must be Marianne's son. It's Mr. Booth, isn't it? Please sit down. I'm glad you could come, Mr. Booth. Mr. Pine has been trying to fill in some information about your mother's medical history, butâ€¦." She shrugged as she gestured for them to sit in the chairs across from her.

"I understand." Booth leaned forward in his chair. "I'll be glad to help. What do you need to know?"

Dr. Whittaker accessed his mother's medical history on her computer. "Well, to begin with, does she have any siblings? Did any of them suffer from a similar disease?"

Booth sighed as he thought about his uncles. He still remembered how much fun they had together whenever he got to see them, which wasn't very oftenâ€¦"My Uncle Frank died of a heart attack when he was in his fifties, just like my grandfather, his father, did before him. My Uncle Mike...he died of a stroke when he was in his sixties. Both of them were older than my mother. I don't think she had any other siblings...she was the babyâ€¦"

"I see." Dr. Whittaker typed quickly as she continued her questioning. "So a family history of cardiovascular disease. Any history of diabetes in the family?"

"Not that I know of." Booth shook his head. "I don't think anyone's had this type of dementia thing, either, but I don't remember much about my grandmother." He paused slightly before he made his next statement. "I had a brain tumor a couple of years ago, Docâ€¦"

"What kind of tumor was it, Mr. Booth?" Dr. Whittaker stopped typing and looked at him with curiosity. "You seem to be in excellent health nowâ€¦"

"Jesus, I don't know...a small one? I'll text my wife and ask her...she'll know what it was."

"Is your wife a neurologist?" Dr. Whittaker turned back to her computer monitor, smiling faintly.

"No, but she's a genius and she'll remember...just a minuteâ€¦" A few seconds passed before Booth's phone chimed to inform him that he had received a text. "It was a benign cerebellar pilocytic astrocytoma...sounds scary, doesn't it?"

Dr. Whittaker smiled as she typed. "I assume there were no long term effects?" She continued to type as Booth shook his head. "Well, good. Thank you for the information."

Reggie noticed the pause in the conversation and took the opportunity to address the doctor. "I want you to add Seeley as next of kin on Marianne's medical records, please. I guess you should list me first, since I'm her husband, but I'm no youngster, so put down there that he can make decisions if I'm not aroundâ€¦"

Dr. Whittaker nodded as she added the note to the chart. "I'll note that on the records, Mr. Pine, but you'll also need to fill out some paperwork for the clinic and the care center. You might also consider giving Mr. Booth Marianne's power of attorney in case you aren't available."

Reggie nodded in agreement. "We have a lot of details like that to work out, but we'll address all of it soon enough. However, the reason we're hereâ€¦"

"Of course." Dr. Whittaker looked up at Booth and began to explain his mother's illness. "It appears that your mother suffered a head injury many years agoâ€¦"

Booth sighed softly as he glanced over at Reggie. "Yes. She was in an abusive relationship when she was much younger...my father beat her..." God, it hurt to hear those words out loud...

"It appears that she perhaps sustained some minor brain damage...nothing that would have affected her everyday life, other than it might have caused some headaches or balance issues. Did she ever mention those symptoms to either of you?"

Both men shrugged as they thought over what they knew about Marianne. Reggie finally responded. "Occasionally she'd get a bad headache, but nothing some aspirin couldn't fix. Is that related to her problems now?"

"I'm not completely sure. When we did the last CT scan, there appeared to be some evidence of a small stroke in the areas of the brain related to memory and cognitive functioning. It's possible that the stroke may have hastened the progress of her dementia. I can't give you a definite time frame, but my impression is that her loss of memory is occurring faster than I would normally expect in this sort of dementia, possibly due to undiagnosed hardening of the arteries related to cardiovascular disease. Even though she is in fairly good shape physically, her mental acuity is decreasing at an alarming rate."



So there it was, finally out in the open...the bad news about his mother's dementia. "How long are we talking about, Dr. Whittaker?" Booth held his breath, not sure he really wanted to know.

"Maybe a year to eighteen months...at the most, two years. Her body could live for several more years after that, but her memory and higher cognitive functions will no longer existâ€|"

Booth let out a deep sigh as he watched Reggie brush away a tear. He avoided eye contact with the doctor as he asked the next question. "I understand. Will we be able to keep her comfortable in the assisted living center? I know Reggie is very concerned about that..."

"Yes. I don't believe she's in any pain physically." Dr. Whittaker bit her lip, blinking back tears as she watched the men across from her begin the long grieving process that usually followed this sort of diagnosis. "I wish I had better news for you, gentlemen...I really do. There are experimental drugs being introduced all the time...other therapies we can try...but I'm not sure they would be effectiveâ€|"

Booth reached over and patted Reggie on the shoulder as the older man wept quietly. "Thank you for seeing us this afternoon, Dr. Whittaker. We need some time to process this information and discuss our options." Booth helped Reggie out of his chair, steadying him as he stood shakily. "Come on, Reggie. Let's go have a cup of coffee. We need to talk." Turning back to the doctor, Booth spoke to her quietly. "We appreciate your time. We'll be in touchâ€|"

### 3. Chapter 3 Past, Present, and Future

\_A/N: I know Booth's mom was not a very popular character on the show, perhaps with good reason, but Reggie's kids looked at her as their mother figure, and I think that's perfectly natural. They were not at fault, so I decided to show some things from their point of view...\_

"Thanks for the coffee, Seeley." Reggie slumped at the table, looking much more frail than he had earlier in the day. "I feel better since we've talked things over." He stirred some sugar into the fresh cup of coffee the waitress had poured for him. "I mean, I knew things were bad, and I tried to hold it together a couple of weeks ago while Marianne was sitting next to me in the office when the doctor gave us the bad news. Today, though...today it was different. For some reason, it was so much more realâ€|"

"I know." Booth stared out the window of the hospital coffee shop as he absentmindedly scooped up a bite of pie. "You'd told me what to expect when you called, but hearing it in person...Jesus. It's...I can't explain it. I guess I'd say it's a shock, even though I knew it was comingâ€|" He shook his head as he glanced at the older man. "I'm sorry you have to go through thisâ€|"

"Just a part of life, you know? 'For better or for worse'...but I didn't think the worst would be so soon. We've only been married a couple of years. We've been together a long time, but it's different when you're married...well, you know that, don't you, Seeley?"

"Yeah, I do." Booth nodded in agreement. "I told Bones...my wife...well, I guess you know that, right? Her real name is Temperance, so Bones is easier sometimesâ€¦" They both chuckled as Booth continued. "We'd been together for a while before we got married, but somehow, after we got married, I felt like the sun shone brighter, the birds sang better, and the flowers smelled sweeter. Of course, she's a scientist, so she said that was BS, but I know what I knowâ€¦everything was better after we got married."

Reggie studied Booth closely, listening as the strong, no nonsense man in front of him waxed poetic about the love of his life. This badass federal agent was a true romantic, just like his Marianne was... "I'm glad you've found someone to make you so happy. It's a grand thing to love someone like that, and to have them love you in return." Sighing, Reggie sipped his coffee. "I'll be able to remember that kind of love even when your mother can't, and that's what's gonna keep me goingâ€¦I'm never gonna give up on her. I love her too much..."

Booth smiled as he watched Reggie square his shoulders and stick out his chin. This gentleman was a strong, resolute man, and his mother was lucky to have him on her side. "I'm glad to hear that, Reggie, and I appreciate it." Booth glanced at his phone. "Listen, I'm gonna go check in at my hotelâ€¦"

"You don't need to go to any hotel. We've got plenty of room at the houseâ€¦" Reggie glared across the table as he folded his arms across his chest, daring Booth to argue with him.

"Nah...I don't want to imposeâ€¦" Booth finished his coffee. "I'll see you tomorrow morning...about nine, right?"

"Well...my kids want to see you while you're here. Why don't you come to the club tonight and have dinner with us? On me? Please?" Reggie tilted his head and grinned in a teasing manner to one side as he waited for an answer. "We've got some of the best steaks in town at my placeâ€¦"

"I appreciate it, but I gotta avoid the stripâ€¦" Booth hesitated for a few seconds before deciding that honesty was necessary at this point in the conversation with his stepfather. Exhaling slowly, he continued. "I have a gambling problem, and I can't be around the action at a casino."

"That's not a problem, son. My place is down on the boardwalk away from that kind of action. It's a supper club. We don't have any card rooms, dice tables, or slot machines. It's just me plugging away on my old piano, trying to entertain the folks while they eat their steaks and chops. Marianne sings...I mean, she sangâ€¦she used to sing..." Reggie brushed away a tear as he explained in his best Jersey accent. "It's a family joint, okay? No cardsharps and crapshooters allowed. So come for dinner, say about seven. That'll give you time to check in at the hotel and call your sweet wife. Come on, no more argumentsâ€¦"

Finally, Booth smiled, realizing he was in no position to refuse. "Fine. Seven this evening. I'll see you thenâ€¦"

Ooooooooooooo

Booth sat back on the bed in his tiny hotel room, closing his eyes as he leaned against the headboard. God, what a day...there was no getting around it. His mother's diagnosis was going to alter the lives of everyone she knew in a negative way. They'd all have to adjust to a new normal, because things would never go back to the way they'd been before.

He glanced at the time on his phone again and smiled to himself. Hitting speed dial, Booth called the one person who would be his anchor in this storm.

"Hiya, Bonesâ€|" Booth felt himself relax as soon as he heard her answer the phone.

"Hello, Booth. How did your meeting with the doctor go? I imagine it was difficultâ€|"

"Yeah, it was very difficult to hear what the doctor had to say. My mom's prognosis is not good. Dr. Whittaker thinks she'll lose all of her memory and other cognitive stuff in about 18 months. Reggie is taking it hard...he's trying to be brave, but I know that even though he's trying to keep himself together, it's eating him up inside."

"Oh, Booth...that's so sadâ€|" Booth heard Brennan sniffle a bit. "I feel so sorry for him."

"Yeah, I do, too. I mean, it's kinda weird, you know? I didn't have my mom in my life for a long time, and I felt like I'd done all my grieving over her already, but now I'm gonna lose her all over again, and I have to grieve for her all over again. Reggie is losing a woman he's loved for years, Bones...I know how horrible I'd feel if something like this happened to you. The fact that we can't do anything to help my mom makes it that much worse. We just have to watch and wait until she leaves usâ€|" Booth sighed as he thought about how they would deal with the next few years. "Hey, Bones...what was the name of the doctor who did my brain surgery? Dr. Jersey?"

"Dr. Jurzik? He's a neurosurgeon, Booth. He doesn't specialize in geriatric neurologyâ€|"

Booth could practically hear Brennan rolling her eyes as she spoke. "I know, but he might know someone who isâ€|" someone who could look over my mom's records to give us a second opinion..."

"Booth, I looked up Dr. Whittaker on the internet. She's very well respected, and she's written several papers on the subject of various treatments for dementia. She's one of the best in her field, and I'm not sure Dr. Jurzik would know of anyone betterâ€|"

"Yeah, okay, but maybe you could ask him anyway?" Booth added a tiny amount of pleading to his voice.

Brennan smiled to herself. Even though she couldn't see him, she was sure that Booth was making his sad puppy eyes as he asked her to call the neurosurgeon. "Okay. I'll call him next week. So what are you going to do this evening? I'm assuming you will be avoiding the casinosâ€|"

"Of course I am." Booth chuckled. "Believe me, I'll be on my best behavior. I'm going to Reggie's supper club for dinner tonight. My stepbrother and stepsister want to see me for some reasonâ€|"

"Well, that sounds entertaining. They probably just want to reconnect and share some memories. What time do you think you'll be home tomorrow?"

"I'm gonna go with Reggie in the morning to see the place, and we're gonna have lunch with Mom...I'll probably be back about 5:30 or so. Tell Christine and Hank I love them. And I love you, Bones...more than I can ever say."

"I love you, too...Booth. I'll see you tomorrow afternoonâ€|"

Ooooooooooooo

Booth strolled down the boardwalk toward the supper club, watching small knots of people slowly move along as they talked or looked in shop windows. It was hard to miss all the bright lights and sounds that were associated with the casinos on the boardwalk, but Booth had left little time for sightseeing in his plans for the evening. He picked up his pace as he saw the flashing neon sign that marked his goal.

\_ Reggie's Steakhouse \_

\_Fine Dining\_

\_Live Entertainment Nightly\_

Booth smiled at the hostess as he entered. "I'm supposed to meet Reggie and his family here tonight. My name's Booth, er, Seeley Booth."

She smiled in return as she cast an appreciative eye his way. "Of course, Mr. Booth. We've been expecting you. Right this wayâ€|" She led him to the table where Reggie and his children were sitting. "Enjoy your mealâ€|"

"Hey, Seeley...glad you could make it." Reggie nodded to the man and woman sitting with him. "This is my son, Dan, and my daughter, Melindaâ€|" Smiles, handshakes, and pleasantries were shared as they all seated themselves at the beautifully set table.

Booth glanced across the table at his stepsiblings. Dan was probably in his late twenties, taller than his father, and he seemed somewhat reserved. Melinda was in her early thirties, chatty, and heavily pregnant. She grinned at Booth as he took in his surroundings.

"This place probably doesn't hold a candle to some of the nice restaurants in DC, but we like itâ€|"

Booth chuckled as he looked over the menu. "My favorite place to eat is what you'd call a greasy spoon diner. This place is just fine, and the menu looks great. I think I'm gonna get a rare New York strip steak and a nice baked potato with butter and sour cream. My wife's a vegetarian, and she's always after me to watch my cholesterol, but maybe what she doesn't know won't hurt her...or me."

They all laughed at Booth's joke as they got ready to place their orders. Finally Dan cleared his throat. "So you're married to Temperance Brennan, the author? Man, I love her booksâ€|"

Melinda giggled as she sipped her water. "I've always wondered where she came up with that Agent Andy guy. I'd sure like to meet someone like him." She arched her eyebrow at Booth. "You don't know anything about that, do you, Seeley?"

Booth nodded as he pursed his lips, recognizing the teasing tone of Melinda's question. "You mean, am I the inspiration for the superhero agent in her books? You know it!" Laughing, Booth explained. "My wife insisted for years that he was completely fictional, but I knew better, and she finally admitted it. I guess you're all really impressed now, right?"

"Oh, definitely." Reggie smiled. "Hey, look at the time. I need to get ready for my first set. You guys eat, and I'll catch up with you later." With that he walked over to the raised platform where the piano was located and began to play a compilation of old standards.

Dan, Melinda, and Booth all sat nervously as their meals arrived at the table. None of them had planned on having to carry on much of a conversation, and there were a few minutes of awkward silence before Melinda spoke up again. "You have two children, Seeley?"

"Three. I have a son, Parker from a previous relationship, a daughter named Christine, and a son named Hank." Booth got out his phone and showed them the pictures of his kids that had been taken the previous Thanksgiving.

Dan smiled as he looked at the pictures. "You're a lucky man. You have a beautiful family."

"I know. I've been blessed." Booth took another fond look at his family before he put his phone back in his pocket. "When's your baby due, Melinda?"

"In six weeks. It's a girl. One of the reasons I wanted to see you is...well, I was wondering...would you be upset if I named my daughter Marianne? Because if it bothers you, we can choose something else, but my husband is really fond of your mom, and we want to honor herâ€|"

Booth inhaled sharply. \_This is so weird. My mom was their mom, tooâ€|and I'm just now getting to know them...and she loves my mom so much she wants to name their daughter after herâ€|.\_"I think that would be wonderful, Melinda. My mother will be so honored. My daughter is named after my wife's mother, and I think it's a fine tradition to carry on."

"We know this must be weird for you, Seeley." Dan focused on his plate as he spoke. "My mom died when I was really young, and when Marianne came along, she sort of filled that void for me, but I know...I know that you missed out, and I'm sorry for thatâ€|"

"It's not your fault, Dan...no use to rehash it, I guess." Booth bit his bottom lip, trying to keep his emotions in check. "I'm glad you

have happy memories of my mom. How did she and Reggie meet?"

"Dad said he saw her singing in a club one night, and he said it was like getting struck by lightning...love at first sight, he always says. It took him about six months until he could convince her to form a work partnership...to be her permanent accompanist. Once she agreed, they started touring the Northeast...the Catskills, the Adirondacks, the Borscht circuit." Melinda smiled as she remembered those days. "We'd get to go with them when school was out. It was a lot of fun for us, wasn't it, Dan?"

"Yeah, if you like listening to the same songs over and over again every night." He pretended to grimace as he reminisced. "Your mom would make us read and recite the multiplication tables or state capitals as we went from gig to gig. Every day was an adventure during the summerâ€¦"

"Dan and I...we feel bad that we have these memories, and you don't, so we have some things for you, if you want...some pictures, press releases, stuff like thatâ€¦" Melinda handed Booth a large manila envelope filled with old photographs and newspaper clippings. "Your mom was saving that to give to you, but she was afraid she'd forget, so she asked me to take care of it. And then there's thisâ€¦" Melinda put a large album on the table between herself and Booth. "She kept a scrapbook about you...I guess your Pops would send her stuff from time to time."

Looking through the pages of the album was like traveling back in time. "Here's my Army portrait after basic training...the press release about going to the Rangers...news of my capture and release in the war...me and Bones and some of our cases...Jesus, this is unreal." Booth was speechless for a few minutes as he turned page after page. "Thank you for bringing this to me...you have no ideaâ€¦" He was too choked up to continue.

Melinda reached across the table to pat his arm as she nodded toward Dan. "We'd like very much to be a family with you...if you wantâ€¦"

"Yeah...it'd be nice to have a brother to help me when my big sister is bossing me around." Dan grinned slightly at his sister. "We'd like you to be part of our lives, if you want, but we would understand if you didn't want to, or if you want to think about it. We want you to be comfortable with the situation, too."

"I'm kinda overwhelmed right now with everything that's going on." Booth exhaled slowly as he thought about the idea of having an extended family. "I think it's a good idea, but I may need some time to get used to the idea. I really respect your father, and I appreciate how kind you've been to me, and it would be nice to have you as my family, but I may need to get rid of some old emotional baggage. Is it okay if we go slow on this?"

"Sure." Melinda smiled, obviously relieved that Booth would even consider the idea. "Whatever you want is fine with us. Take your time. We promise that we won't all surprise you for Christmas dinner. We'll call thirty minutes before we get there." They all laughed again as they finished their meal. \_At least these people are fun to be around, \_Booth thought. \_It might be good to have family members like thisâ€¦\_

"Oh, listen, Seeley. Dad's about to wrap up his set."

"Ladies and Gentlemen," Reggie began as he played an arpeggio, "I want to dedicate this song to my lovely wife. It's one of her favorites. She can't be here tonight, so you're gonna have to put up with me singing itâ€|." He played the opening chords and then began in a quavering voiceâ€|.

\_Try to remember the kind of September \_

\_When life was slow and oh, so mellowâ€|\_

Melinda glanced over at her stepbrother, and was surprised to see tears streaming down his cheeks. "Seeley, what's wrong? Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm fine." He tried to swallow the lump in his throat. "It's just...I remember my mom singing that to me as we danced around our basement when I was a little kid...She loves that song..." He picked up his jacket and phone, trying to brush his tears away. "Listen, could you make my apologies to your dad for me? I've gotta go. Tell him I said thanks, and I'll see him in the morning." With that, Booth turned and quickly left the restaurant before Dan or Melinda could stop him.

Melinda looked up at the platform where her father sat, and noticed the tears streaming down his face as well. She sighed as she turned to her brother, Dan. "With all that's going on, I'm afraid the tears are just beginning for all of us."

#### 4. Chapter 4 Relieving Stress

\_A/N: For those of you who don't know 45's were small records that usually had a single song on both sides.\_

The alarm on his phone kept insisting on going off, no matter how many times Booth hit the snooze button. Groaning softly, he finally rolled over and picked up his phone from the night stand to shut off the alarm. 7:30 AM had come much too soon after he'd finally been able to fall asleep. He sat up and dangled his feet over the side of the bed, stretching and yawning as he tried to convince himself that he was really ready to face the events of the day, but without much success. He flopped backward on the bed and watched the ceiling fan spin for a while as he thought about last night. Embarrassing...that was the only word to describe it. God...he wondered what Reggie's kids would think of him now. They were trying so hard to extend a hand of friendship, even bringing gifts for him, which he then managed to leave at the restaurant as he tried to avoid having his meltdown in public. \_God, I'm such an idiot..they'll probably think I was ditching them...that I didn't like them...I hope I get a chance to explain things to themâ€| \_Gordon-Gordon had been right. This situation was loaded with emotional landmines, and he sure as hell had stepped in the middle of a big one last night...and it blew him into several overly emotional pieces.

It was that song. As much as Booth hated to admit it, it was that goddamn song that had set him off. The memories came flooding into his mind, as clear as if the whole thing had happened yesterday...he

was nine years old once again, tall for his age, but still skinny as a rail. He'd gone down to the basement to ask his mom about something for school, and she was looking through her collection of 45's while she listened to a recording of Jerry Orbach singing \_Try to Remember\_ on her little portable record player. She said she loved it...it was a favorite song of hers. She teased her son, suggesting that they should dance, so they whirled around the basement, laughing loudly at Booth's clumsy attempts to waltz until they heard his father yelling angrily as he stomped down the basement steps. Jared had been upstairs crying and wouldn't stop, and it had made his father furious. Dad had said his mom was a failure at caring for her children, and no son of his should be dancing like a sissy anyway...one thing led to another and there was more yelling and crying and then his dad slapped his mom hard on the cheek, drawing blood. Booth had tried to stop it from happening, saying that the dancing had been his fault, but he had been shoved aside roughly, causing him to bump his head hard on a cabinet. Then his dad smashed all of his mother's records and the record player, saying there would be no more stupid music like that in his house.

The text alert on his phone chimed. It was Bones, checking on him. He tried to pull himself together before he called her...she'd know something was wrong, but he still wanted to put a on a brave act, like everything was okay. Inhaling deeply to steady himself, he hesitated slightly and then pressed her number on speed dial.

"Mornin', Bones."

"Booth, I'm surprised you've called me. I sent the text to see how you were, but I didn't expect you to answer...it was more of rhetorical text not that I didn't want to hear from you, but it seems unnecessary..."

"Yeah, well I missed seeing you this morning, you know? I've been used to waking up next to you every day seeing your beautiful face...feeling you close as I hold you in my arms..."

Brennan knew it was more than that. Booth was the one person she understood perfectly. "What's wrong, Booth? Has your mother taken a sudden turn for the worse? You sound upset."

"Nah, nothing like that. I'm fine. It's just that dinner last night didn't exactly turn out like I hoped." He sighed sadly as he continued. "Reggie's kids are really nice people, and we were having a good time. They brought me some newspaper articles and pictures of Mom, and this album my mom has been keeping with stuff about me."

"That sounds enjoyable. I'm glad you like them. Why would that be upsetting?" Brennan could hear the edge in her husband's voice. He was obvious still agitated by what had happened the previous evening.

"Reggie was playing the piano...that's what he does, you know? He runs through this set of music while people are having their dinner, playing the piano and singing. And I was okay with it...he's good...but then he played this song called \_Try to Remember\_, which is one of my mom's favorites, and it brought back all these bad memories for me, and...I basically came unglued at the restaurant,



and I had to leave to avoid making a scene. A lot of thoughts came flooding into my mind, and before I knew it I was bawling like a baby. I couldn't even tell Reggie goodbye because I just had to get out the hell out of there. Who knows what they think of me now? Jesus...I screwed it all up, Bones. They were talking about us being a family, and I sure shot that to hell..."

"Oh, Booth, things will okay, I'm sure of itâ€|" The concern in her voice was soothing to his wounded heart until he heard the rest of her statement. "I'm surprised you managed to maintain your composure as long as you didâ€|"

"What? You thought I'd have a meltdown and embarrass the shit out of myself in a crowded restaurant? I've got self control, you know...I can handle my emotions.", he blustered loudly. "I'm a strong personâ€|I was a goddamn sniper, you know? I can handle a lot of stress..."

Brennan paused, allowing Booth to vent his frustration before she continued her explanation. "I know you're a strong person emotionally, but the stress of the situation with your mother's illness added to the stress of meeting your stepfather and stepsiblings and trying to explain to them about why you might still resent your mother is the recipe for an epic emotional breakdown. You're not Superman, Booth. You don't have to be perfect. Hearing that song was the trigger that finally caused your body to give in to the stress that was mounting up inside of you. Crying helps to relieve the stress. You had reached a breaking point. That's all it was. It's quite normal to feel out of control in a situation like this, and the rush of chemicals in your brain and adrenaline in your body would most certainly cause a tremendous emotional response. It was a physiological reaction to stress in addition to the emotional reaction to the circumstances that caused you to feel so upset. The fact that you were able to maintain normalcy as long as you did yesterday demonstrates just how strong you areâ€|"

There was another pause as Booth thought over what his wife had just said. "Sorry, Bones. I didn't mean to yell at you. I was just so mortified at how I reacted...I really just wanted to crawl into a hole and die."

"I'm sure Reggie and his children will understand, Booth. I know you realize they must be upset by the situation with your mother as well, and they also have no idea as to whether or not you're going to make an effort to be on friendly terms with them."

"I really was surprised at the effort that Melinda and Dan went to last night so that I'd feel comfortable with the situation. You're right, Bones. It's weird for them, too. Dan said he thought of my mother as being like his mother, too, and I guess it's hard for him to think of her as being my mother as well. The whole thing is just a shit storm, and I didn't do anything to make it any better when I ran out of the club last night without saying goodbye."

"I think you need to tell Reggie how you feel, Booth, and then you need to listen to what he tells you. I think you'll find out that you're both feeling the same thing."

"Yeah, you're probably right. It's gonna be hard on everyone if we don't do a better job of communicating with each other. Okay, I'll

talk things over with Reggie. Thanks, Bones. I knew I'd feel better if I called you, because you always tell me the truth, even if it stings a bit. I'm gonna go get ready to visit Mom. I'll be home for dinner this evening. I love youâ€|"

Brennan chuckled softly. "I didn't mean to sting you, Booth. I was merely trying to explain the physiological mechanisms of your responses. And I love you, too."

Ooooooooooooo

Booth gritted his teeth as he pulled into the parking lot of the assisted living center. He'd been shot at, kidnapped, almost drowned, arrested and imprisoned unjustly, been separated from his family on more than one occasion and had lost his brother...but in some ways, this was going to be one of the hardest things he'd ever faced in his life. He'd long ago adjusted to the fact that he and his mother would never have a normal relationship, and while it hurt that they weren't closer, he'd accepted it and moved on. This was different...he had to readjust. Reggie had asked him to visit his mother, and Booth found himself wishing once again that things had been different with her...but he knew he couldn't change the past. \_The best thing is to try to deal with the present, and not think about the past or the future, \_he thought. \_I wonder how Reggie's gonna feel about things. He must know how I feel...he knows my mom left me and Jared behind to start a new life with him. He must know I'm still angry and bitter about that...I gotta get over that, thoughâ€| \_

Booth waved to Reggie, who was sitting on a bench outside the front door of the care center. "Hey, Reggie." \_Christ...this is so awkwardâ€|\_ Booth raised his eyes skyward, silently asking for help, before continuing with a sheepish expression. "Listen, about last night...I'm sorry I couldn't stay and say thanks for the dinner. It was nice spending time with Melinda and Danâ€|"

Reggie rose from the bench to shake Booth's hand. "I'm sorry, too, Seeley. I wanted to get back to the table before you left, but I had to go compose myself in my dressing room...I was in no condition to be seen in public after singing that songâ€|"

"What? I don't understandâ€|" Booth gave Reggie a sideways glance, trying to see if the older man was teasing him.

Reggie sighed and inhaled deeply before he could continue. "I've played that song hundreds of times, and it wasn't a problem. I remember trying many times to convince your mom to add it to her repertoire because it's the right kind of song for her voice, but she refused...she said she loved it but it bothered her to sing it, although she never told me why. It's never upset me to play it before, but last night, it hit me...your mom probably won't even remember that tune anymore...she loved music so much and she can't remember most of it anymore...music gave her such joy, and now that's goneâ€|" Reggie ran his hand across his eyes, trying to wipe away his tears.

Swallowing his own tears, Booth put his arm around the older man's shoulders. "I know. Bones says that music can trigger a need in people to release emotional stress, and crying does that. I've often experienced that myself."

"Anyway, when I finally got back to the table, Melinda said you'd had to leave because you weren't feeling wellâ€|"

"Yeah. I was real tired, and to tell the truth, I got really emotional, too, and I had to get out of there. That song has lots of good and bad memories attached to it for me." Booth exhaled, finally feeling as if a burden was being lifted. "I don't want Dan and Melinda to feel like I was angry with them, or that I don't want to be a part of a family with them, because I do. I feel really stupid because they brought me stuff from my mom, and I left it there at the restaurantâ€|"

"Melinda gave me the envelope and the album last night since she knew I'd see you this morning. Those things are in my car, and you can get them before you leave this afternoon. They understood, Seeley. They don't know everything that happened between you and your mom, because I decided that wasn't really any of their business, but they know you two were estranged from each other. If you ever decide to tell Melinda and Dan what happened between you and your mom, I'll support you, but if not, that's fine, too. I know your mom left you and your brother in a bad situation with your dad. I really can't defend her on that, but I love her, warts, bad decisions, and all. I have for a long timeâ€|no matter what she did in her past, I've always loved her..."

"I appreciate that, Reggie. It's gonna take a while before I can figure out what to tell Dan and Melinda, if anything. After all these years, it's still hard for me. Sometimes I still struggle with guilt, feeling like her leaving was my fault, even though I know better now. Maybe if we can talk about my mom from time to time, I can find out more about what she was thinking, and I can deal with it betterâ€|.that is, if you don't mind. I don't want to make things worse for youâ€|"

"Actually, Seeley, I think I'd like to talk to you about my time with your mother. There are a lot of things about those years you might want to knowâ€|" Reggie nodded as they moved toward the front door of the care center. "But right now, we'd better go see the center's director. She's going to give you a tour of the place before we see Marianne...you know, so you know what kind of care and treatment Marianne's going to have."

"Good idea." Booth paused before they entered. "Thanks, Reggie, for everything you're doing for my mom...and for me."

## 5. Chapter 5 The Lucky Ones

The tour of the assisted living center was complete, and there was little more for Booth to do now but wait for his mother to meet him in the sunny commons area. Mrs. Porter, the center's administrator, had suggested that it might be more comfortable for everyone if Reggie went to get Marianne from her small apartment and brought her to the commons, so Booth sat on one of the plush mossy green velvet sofas and took in his surroundings. Sunlight streamed into the bright room, which was tastefully decorated with traditional furnishings and dreamy artwork. There were several large planters filled with greenery and a large tropical fish tank had been built into one of the walls, adding a splash of vivid color. A soft buzz of happy conversation filled the air. Booth smiled to himself. Of

course...Saturday would be visitors' day. Small groups of two or three people were situated around the lounge, laughing and talking. It was a pleasant room, and Booth felt himself relax a little bit. \_This seems like a nice place...even nicer than where Pops lived...the people living here seem happy. Maybe this will work out well after all. I'll talk to my mom for a half hour or so, have lunch with them, and then hit the roadâ€|.this is a good place for my mom... \_

He considered what he had seen on his tour of the facility earlier in the day. The facility used state of the art equipment in treating their patients, and the building had been recently renovated in order to give it a homier feel. Mrs. Porter had shown Booth a vacant apartment similar to the one his mother was living in. It had a small living area and off to one side there was a nook for a dining table and chairs. This apartment had a small kitchenette with a dorm size refrigerator and a two burner cook top, but because his mother was in the memory care wing, hers did not. "It's much safer that way," Mrs. Porter had commented. "We don't want our clients in that wing to do any cooking on their own." There was a single bedroom with an en suite bathroom adjacent to the living area. The apartments didn't have a lot of square footage, but they were bright and cheerful, and they also allowed for some sense of home and individuality. The whole care center was immaculately clean with wide, well lit halls and pleasant views from the many windows. Booth was also pleased that there didn't seem to be the medicinal odor he usually associated with hospitals and nursing homes.

Mrs. Porter locked the apartment's door, and smiled as she turned to Reggie and Booth. "Mr. Pine will be moving into your mother's apartment soon, Mr. Booth. We're pleased that we can offer the opportunity for conjugal living arrangements to our clients. We believe that allowing the spouse of our clients to live with them allows for a more comfortable, home-like atmosphere."

Reggie nodded in agreement. "Yep, I'm excited about that finally happening. I'm gonna sell my house and give away most of the leftover stuff that Dan and Melinda don't want. I'll be able to come and go as I please when I live here, so I can still go sing at the club for a few months if I want, but I think I'll sell it too, if Dan doesn't want it. I miss being with Marianne...I don't want to be away from her so much during the day. And I'm no spring chicken myself, so when I start to go downhill they can take care of me, too." He chuckled and shook his head. "Of course, by that time, the staff here may be sick of me, and they might kick me out of the joint." He winked at Mrs. Porter, who laughed heartily.

"I think we'll keep you, Reggie. We need someone to play the piano for our dance party nights, you knowâ€|", Mrs. Porter said with a sly wink. "Just last week Mr. Hopkins was requesting some good boogie-woogie pianoâ€|"

"I can woogie, but I need to brush up on my boogie." Booth grinned as he remembered Reggie's joke. He'd had a few minutes to think things through as he waited for Reggie to bring his mother from her room to see him, and he realized again just how lucky his mother had been to find a guy like Reggie...someone who loved her even after he found out about her leaving her sons behind...who loved her even when she may not have been lovable...who loved her unconditionally no matter what she had done. \_I know what it's like to be that lucky. \_ \_I know

how it feels to be loved like that, and it's an awesome thing. Bones has stuck it out with me through all sorts of shit...including Hannah and my gambling problems...God, I love Bones so much...if that's what my mom has with Reggie, then I'm glad for her...maybe she tried to feel that way about my dad...tried to love my dad unconditionally, but she couldn't...it's such a hard thing to doâ€¦|\_

"Here we are, darling." Booth was roused out of his musings by the sound of Reggie's voice as he cooed softly to Marianne. He was holding her hand as they stood next to the sofa where Booth was sitting. "Look, my dear, you have a visitor this morning. It'sâ€¦|."

"Hiya, Mom." Booth stood to embrace his mother but was quite startled to see the horrified look on his mother's face. She began to tremble violently as she held up her hands and turned away from him, looking for an escape route. Finally she grabbed Reggie's arm and held it tightly.

"No, Reggie, no!" Marianne began to raise her voice. "Get him away from me. He's mean...he'll hurt me. Get him away. Don't let him hurt me! Take me back home now! Edwin! How did you find me? You can't hurt me here. They won't let you. Reggie won't let you. Stop...Reggie, take me homeâ€¦|Please, Reggie!" She clung to Reggie, sobbing loudly as Booth stood perfectly still, shocked at what was taking place.

"Oh, my God!", he said softly to Reggie, "She thinks I'm...my dad...oh, no! Dammit! I'm so sorry. I didn't even think about that." Booth sank back down to the sofa, wiping his eyes. "I mean, I guess I knew I looked like my dad, but I never expected her to react so poorlyâ€¦|"

"It's okay. It's gonna be okay." Reggie crooned softly to Marianne, stroking her back as they swayed gently back and forth. "Come on, darling. You know I'd never bring Edwin here where he might hurt you, don't you? I love you too much to do that. Come on now, take a peek. He's not going to hurt you. Just a little peek..." Marianne turned slightly toward Booth. "That's good. See? Remember we talked about your white knight coming? Well, there he is...that's Seeley."

"Seeley? Is it really my Seeley?" Marianne clasped Reggie's arm with one hand as she reached out to touch Booth's cheek with her other hand. "Is it really my little boy? Look at you...you're all grown up now. Children grow up so fast, don't they, Reggie?"

Booth grinned up at her and offered his hand. "Yeah, Mom, it's me, Seeley. I came to see your new home. It's very pretty...I think you're gonna like it here."

Marianne gingerly sat down next to Booth and patted his knee. "Well, it's only temporary, you know, until Reggie and I get married. I'm not going to travel all over the country singing anymore. I'm gonna retire and we're gonna stay home all the time. Then we'll buy ourselves a nice big house so that you and Rebecca can bring the baby and stay with us any time you want. Won't that be fun? I want a house with a couple of acres of land and a pond so you can fish in the summer and ice skate in the winter. Maybe when the baby gets older you can teach him to swim..."

Booth glanced up at Reggie, unsure of what to say. He knew that correcting his mother's mistaken memories would make her angry and embarrassed, but he couldn't let some of her ramblings go by without saying something. Reggie shrugged and smiled as he sat on the other side of Marianne.

"Darling, you went to Seeley's wedding, remember? He got married to the woman who works at the Jeffersonian. Her name is Temperance, not Rebecca."

"Oh, that's right. I forgot. I'm sorry, Honey." Marianne chuckled a bit as she pinched Booth's cheek slightly. "I'm getting a little bit forgetful. I get confused easily sometimes. I remember you had a beautiful church wedding. It was such a pretty churchâ€¦."

Desperate to change the subject, Booth pulled some photographs out of his wallet. "Hey, Mom, look what I brought you...pictures of your grandkids. Here's one of Parker, one of Christine, and one of Hank...we had a hard time getting Hank to sit still, you know? And here's one of the kids all together, and then there's one of all of usâ€¦look, I wrote that on the back of the pictures so you can tell Reggie who they areâ€¦"

"Thank you, Sweetheart. You've always been so thoughtful." Marianne grew slightly agitated as she began to look around the room. "Why didn't Jared come with you today? I'm surprised that he didn't make the trip with youâ€¦it would've been easier for him if he had." Booth saw Reggie shake his head slightly.

"Um, Jared couldn't make it today, Mom." \_I guess that's not really a lie...\_

"Well, maybe next time. I guess the Navy does keep him busy with all of those boats, doesn't it? Are you sure your father can't find me?" Marianne was starting to panic as she grabbed Reggie's hand. "Don't let him find me. I'm afraid of your father. He hurts me."

"It's going to be okay, Marianne." Reggie patted her hand gently. "Remember? We talked about this a few years ago. Edwin is dead...he can't hurt you ever again. You're going to be safe here, I promise."

"Then who is this next to me?" Marianne eyed Booth suspiciously. "He looks like Edwin, my first husband. Are you sure it's not him?"

"I'm Seeley, Mom. I'm your son. Hey, guess what? We're thinking of having Christine start piano lessons. Bones thinks she has a lot of talent, just like you do. I think she inherited her talent from her grandmother. How about that, huh? Christine had the lead in the church Christmas pageant, too...she was the Herald Angel. Parker still lives in London. He's doing really well in school there. And Hank, the baby, does what most babies do...he eats and poops mostly, but he's learning to say a few words, and he can wave bye-bye."

Marianne abruptly changed the subject. "How is your grandfather? I haven't talked to him for a couple of weeks, Seeley. Is he okay?" Marianne turned to face Booth. "You know, I need to thank him for raising you two boys right. I knew I couldn't do it...I knew I was

too weak...too afraid. You boys needed a good male role model" "

Booth exhaled slowly as he listened to his mother talk about Pops, trying to decide what to tell her. "Jesus, what do I say now? I think it's another one of those times for the kindness of a lie" "

"Pops is doing as well as you could expect for someone of his age." "I'm not sure she'd remember even if I told her Pops was gone...Let her be happy today" "

Reggie checked the time on his watch. "Darling, it's time to get ready for lunch. They're having your favorite today...baked chicken. You love baked chicken, remember?" Booth watched as Reggie helped Marianne get up from the couch, steadying her a bit as she regained her balance. "And here's a nice surprise: Seeley's going to have lunch with us, too."

Looking into his mother's eyes, Booth could tell she had no idea who Seeley was, but he was determined to make the best of a bad situation. "I've looked forward to it all week, Reggie. Let's go have some chicken." Laughing, he held out his arm for his mother to take. "Care to join me, Mrs. Pine?"

"I guess so. I just hope my husband doesn't care if I'm seen with a handsome man in public." It was a rare lucid moment...a short period of time when the old Marianne surfaced, but just as quickly as it came, it faded away. "But I don't know who you are. Are you going to eat lunch with us?"

"I'm Seeley, Mom. I'm your son. And yes, I'm going to eat lunch with you."

"Well, that's nice. I think we're having chicken today. Do you like chicken, young man?"

"Yes, ma'am, I do. I guess I'm in luck." Booth smiled at his mother as he guided her into the dining room. "I'm glad I could join you today."

Ooooooooooooo

Their lunch together had been difficult. The food was bland and tasteless, and Booth was exhausted from answering the same questions over and over again. His mother had decided that he was actually Jared and that it was her son Seeley who had died, and after many explanations of what had really happened, Marianne was frustrated to the point of tears.

"Why didn't anyone tell me Jared had died, Seeley? You're my son! How could you keep this from me? I have a right to know! I didn't even get to go to his funeral!" She sobbed loudly as Reggie embraced her. "Oh, Reggie. See how badly everyone treats me? They hide things from me" "no one tells me the truth!"

"Hush, now, darling. I know you're upset about Jared, but no one is hiding anything. I'm sorry Jared died, but we went to his funeral. Seeley arranged a very nice funeral for Jared, remember?" Reggie rubbed her shoulder gently. "I think you're just tired, Sweetheart. Why don't I take you back to your room, okay?" Glancing at Booth,

Reggie continued. "You go lay down for a few minutes, while I come back and thank your son for the visit, okay?"

Booth nodded in understanding as he bent down to kiss his mother's cheek. "It's good to see you, Mom. I'll be back to visit in a few weeks. Maybe I can bring Bones with me next time. I'm going to wait on the bench outside the front door, Reggie." He watched as Reggie slowly walked with Marianne down the hallway to her apartment.

Ooooooooooooo

Twenty minutes later, Reggie came outside and joined Booth on the bench in the pleasant garden area in front of the care center. "I'm sorry if your mother upset you, Seeley, but she doesn't do those things on purpose. It's just that she really can't remember many details anymore."

"I know, Reggie. I can just imagine how hard it is for you, seeing her like this everydayâ€|" Booth looked over at Reggie and was surprised to see that he was smiling.

"I love your mother, son, and while it makes me sad to see her this way, it makes me happy to take care of her. I wish things were different...I wish she could remember all the good times we've had together. I wish we could still make music together, but none of that is important any more. What's important is that we're together now. That's all I ever wanted." Reggie brushed a tear away as he stood up. "We'd better go get your things from my car. Melinda will kill me if I forget to give them to youâ€|" He extended his hand toward Booth. "Thanks again for coming, Seeley."

"My pleasure, Reggie, but I'm the one who should be saying thank you. You're a great guy, and my mom is lucky to have you."

"We were lucky to have each other. Don't be a stranger. Let's keep in touch, okay?"

"Definitely. Tell Dan and Melinda thanks for me. I want to know when the baby is bornâ€|."

Booth got into his car and waved one more time as he pulled out of the parking lot, watching as Reggie smiled and went back inside the care center. \_My mom is lucky to have Reggie...and, I think...I'm lucky to have him in my life, too.\_

## 6. Chapter 6 What We Deserve

Brennan rolled over sleepily to put her arm around her husband, only to find that he wasn't lying next to her in bed. She glanced at the clock on the nightstand. Midnight. She sighed and shook her head, wondering if Booth had dozed off in his chair again. She knew he was tired from being away from home Friday and most of Saturday, and normally she'd be hesitant to disturb him, but she was also aware that sleeping all night in that chair would cause his back to ache terribly the next morning. He'd be irritable either way, but she decided that it would be more tolerable if he was irritable from being fatigued without the additional complication of an irritation caused by sore muscles. Pulling on her robe, she moved quietly down



the hall, hoping to avoid disturbing her children. She stopped and stood in the doorway, surprised to hear soft music coming from the family room. She saw the lamp glowing next to the chair and walked over to wake her husband as gently as possible.

"Booth? It's lateâ€|" Brennan reached to touch his shoulder but was surprised to find him awake. Looking over his shoulder, she watched as he turned the pages in an old, battered photo album. "Are you alright? You seemed pensive this evening at dinner." Glancing toward the stereo, she listened for a few seconds. "What song is this? It's pretty, but it seems different than the music you normally listen to."

Booth smiled sadly as he reached up to guide his wife onto the chair with him. "That song is called \_Try to Remember. \_It's being sung by a man named Jerry Orbachâ€|"

"You mean that man that used to play the character of Lennie Briscoe on that Law and Order television program? That's surprisingâ€|"

"Yeah, that's him. I'm surprised you know who that is, Bones." He grinned as he leaned back into the chair. "Jerry Orbach was a very talented man. He made this song popular in a stage play during the 1960's called \_The Fantasticks. \_This song was one of my mother's favorites when she was a young woman." Booth tilted his head as he listened to it. "I found it on the internet and downloaded it so I could listen to it whenever I wanted. I'm sorry it woke you up, though. I didn't think it was that loud."

Brennan perched on the arm of the chair and shook her head. "I woke up because you weren't lying next to me in bed, Booth. I know you must be exhausted from your weekend. Are you having a hard time sleeping?"

"Maybe a little. Here...look at this album Melinda gave me. It's filled with things about me that my mother has saved throughout her lifetime. Here's my Army portrait that they took with I finished basicâ€|" He chuckled softly. "I thought I was such a stud...and here's my official Ranger picture...here's a newspaper article about when I got rescued after I was capturedâ€|" Booth sighed as he turned the pages. "I guess Pops sent her stuff about me and about Jared, but I don't know where Jared's stuff is...Padme might like to have that, if she ever gets over being angry at himâ€|"

"Were you surprised that your mom had these things, Booth?" Brennan paused to admire his Ranger picture. "Your mother was obviously quite proud of you, and with good reason. You look so handsome in your uniform."

"I was kind of surprised. I mean, she moved around a lot when she was younger, but I guess she must've had some sort of permanent addressâ€|" Pops would've wanted to be able to get in touch with her if anything happened to me or Jared while we were in the service." He flipped to pages in the back of the album. "There's clippings in here about cases that I worked on when I first started at the FBI and more from when we began to work cases together. Look...here's that article the newspaper had run about the Jeffersonian team right before Howard Epps escaped and killed his wife, and when the woman who ran the restaurant was murdered." He sighed as he pointed to another article.

"Here's an article about when I killed Christopher Pelant at the power plant. It's like my whole adult life story is in this bookâ€¦"

"It was very thoughtful of Melinda to give you this album and those clippings you showed me earlier this evening. It seems as if you were able to establish a relationship with Reggie's children while you were visiting your mother." Brennan watched Booth's expression carefully, wondering if he was comfortable with meeting his stepsiblings for the first time.

"I like Reggie's kids. They were really nice to me, and they want us to be friends. It was weird for all of us at first, but we were finally able to get past that. Melinda wants to name her new daughter Marianne after my mom. Dan and Melinda both love my mom a lotâ€¦" Booth's voice trailed off as he closed the album and ran his hand across the cover. "They have so many good memories of her, and it's not my place to ruin those memories. Reggie hasn't told them anything about what happened between my mom and me before they knew her, out of respect for all of us, I think, and I can't see any reason to tell them about our past either. My mom isn't in any shape to be able to explain things or to defend herself. It would just end up sounding mean and vindictiveâ€¦"

"You like Reggie, too?"

"He's a really nice guy. The whole thing is so sad...my mom finally has a good man to love her, and she doesn't even know for sure who he is most of the time."

Brennan put her arm around Booth's shoulders and leaned her head against his. "I know it was hard to see your mom dealing with the effects of her memory loss, Booth." She paused as she rubbed his back. "I'm sorry you will never be able to get an apology from her. It's what you deserve after the way she treated you."

"Nah." Booth reached up to pat his wife's hand. "It's okay. I can forgive her without an apology." He shifted in his seat so that Brennan was sitting on his lap leaning her head against his chest. Stroking her hair, he sniffled softly. "I had a long time to think about things on the way home today. Are you familiar with the saying 'Pride goes before destruction'?"

She nodded. "I've heard that before. It's from the Old Testament, isn't it?"

"Yeah. It's in Proverbs. When my mom came to see me right before she got married again, I was proud of who I was...I was proud that I'd been successful in spite of how she left me and Jared, and I was proud that I didn't need her in my life. I was a self made manâ€¦"

"All those things are true, Booth. Why would that make you feel like you had been overly proud?"

"Because it wasn't just me that made me successful. It was you and the rest of the team that helped me. But that's not the point, really. I was really proud of myself, but then came the destruction part. It was about...what...eighteen months later that I began to gamble again, because I was too proud...I thought I could handle it,

and I ended up having to leave my family alone until I could get a handle on things. When I abandoned you and our kids so I could feed my addictionâ€¦I did some of the same things my mom did. I wasn't really any better than she was."

"Booth, you got helpâ€¦" Brennan snuggled against her husband's chest. "It's not the same thingâ€¦"

"Not exactly, but my situation isn't all that different from my mom's. I got into a bad situation, and I didn't know how to get out of it. The only difference between my mom and me was that my dad didn't try to do anything to help her. You put your foot down and made me get help, or I would've lost my family, just like my mother did."

Brennan's brows knit together as she considered what Booth said. "The situation is also different because you apologized to me."

"Yeah, but when I fell off the gambling wagon and apologized, I didn't mean it at first...I was like a little kid who knew he'd been caught with a hand in the cookie jar and was trying to avoid trouble. Then, later on, when I realized what I almost lost, and when I realized what I had to do to get it back, I begged for forgiveness, and you gave it to me. I don't know if you understand how thoroughly grateful that made me feel toward you. You chose to forgive me. You chose to love me no matter how messed up I was. You would have been within your rights to leave me, and you chose to stay." Booth closed his eyes reverently, inhaling deeply as he drew Brennan close. "Aldo told me once that love is so wonderful to receive because very few of us actually deserve it, and so when we get it, it's a precious gift. You gave me such a precious gift when you loved me enough to forgive me. How could I keep from giving that same gift to my mother? And when I gave her that gift, even though she could never know about it, I finally felt at peace with things that have happened between us. I'm not as bitter. It's not gonna bother me so much to go see her now."

"Well, as we've discussed before, the core tenet of the Jesus myth is forgiveness. That's why it's so attractive to so many people. Many people crave forgiveness for their actions."

Booth pretended to scowl at Brennan. "It's not a myth...but you're right when you say people crave forgiveness. I'm glad you're always willing to forgive me since I make so many mistakes." He grinned as he kissed Brennan on the cheek.

Brennan smiled primly. "I understand. On the rare occasions when I'm mistaken it's nice to know that you will forgive me as well." She giggled as Booth raised an eyebrow. "So will you keep in touch with Reggie and his children?"

"I want to...Reggie's gonna need a break every now and then from taking care of my mom. Melinda's gonna be busy with a new baby and Dan is still just a kid. That place is expensive, too. I'm gonna see about trying to help him with some of the expenses."

"I received a nice check for selling the movie rights for my last book. I think that would help defray the costs of your mother's care."

"Bones...it's my mother. I can't let you do that with your moneyâ€¦"

"Reggie and your mother are part of our family. You've always said that family comes first, correct?" Brennan smiled as she caressed Booth's cheek. "Besides, how many times have you helped out my dad and Russ? Several times, so no more arguments. It's settled."

"Alright, but I'll need to talk to Reggie first to see what he says. He's got a lot of pride, you know. We probably need to set up something for ourselves, too, so our kids don't have to pay out of their own pockets to keep us somewhere. Maybe some sort of savings account, or something like that."

"I'll call our financial advisor on Monday and see what she suggests."

Booth heaved a contented sigh as he pulled Brennan closer. "I'm so lucky to have you, Bones. I love you so much."

She smiled as she kissed him. "You're a good man, Booth, and I love you, too. Come on now...time for bed."

"I'm glad tomorrow's Sunday...I'm not feeling very sleepy right now. I may want to stay up a few minutes longerâ€¦" Booth winked at his wife as he turned off the lamp.

Brennan smiled demurely as she walked toward their bedroom. "I think that can be arrangedâ€¦"

\_Deep in December, it's nice to remember\_

\_Although you know the snow will follow,\_

\_Deep in December, it's nice to remember\_

\_Without a hurt, the heart is hollow.\_

\_Deep in December, it's nice to remember\_

\_The fire of September that made us mellow.\_

\_Deep in December, our hearts should remember, \_

\_And follow.\_

\_ -Try to Remember by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt\_

Thanks for reading my little story. Laura

End  
file.